

THE SURVIVAL DOCTOR'S Ultimate Emergency Medical Supplies

by James Hubbard, MD, MPH, "The Survival Doctor"™

Over time, as I've written, spoken and taught about surviving disasters, many people have asked me what I'd put in my own first-aid kit or emergency bag in case I couldn't get to a medical facility. So I came up with my top must-haves, along with useful, optional extras. Then I compiled them all in this report and decided to make it available for free, so everyone could have a good list of what to keep on-hand. This goes beyond your average first-aid kit. It's my ultimate emergency medical supplies list.

You'll customize your emergency supply kits depending on specific illnesses, ages of family members, medical training, and so on. While this is my ultimate list, that doesn't mean it's exhaustive. I've tried to keep the supplies to a minimum, knowing portability is essential. And some things I've listed can be used for more than one purpose. This helps you save both space and money.

The recommended amounts are per kit. At the end of this report, I've included two convenient checklists, broken down by the types of stores where you'll find the supplies.

I'd suggest having a first-aid kit in the car, at your work, and in your bug-out bag if you have one. (A bug-out bag is a packed bag you keep handy in case of evacuation.) Then, have a much larger emergency medical supplies kit at home. Store copies of this report in your kits as well, so you have reminders about what you can use the items for.

If you'd like to know more about how to use these supplies and learn easy-to-follow directions for treating emergencies when you can't get to a doctor, just [download my e-books](#), *The Survival Doctor's Guide to Wounds* and *The Survival Doctor's Guide to Burns*. They're only \$3.99 each, and you never know when you might need them.

Throughout the report, I've also included links to my blog posts about treating various ailments. The more you read in advance, the more prepared you'll be.



The Essentials

1. Infection Preventers

✓ **Vinyl gloves.** Emergencies outside a clinic are never sterile. The gloves are not only to cut down on getting germs in the wound but to keep the caregiver safe from potentially germ-carrying bodily fluids. Tips:

- Get a box of disposable gloves for the house, and put a few pairs in each of your bags.
- Get the vinyl type to avoid latex allergies.
- Go for one-size-fits-all or the large size. If they're too small, you can't use them, but if they're too large they're kind of bulky but usable.
- The cheaper ones work well but may be more likely to tear. If that happens, just slip a second pair over the first.
- Keep the gloves in a **resealable plastic bag**. The bag could come in handy for irrigating a wound (punch a hole in the bottom with a safety pin, and squeeze for water pressure) and multiple other uses.
- A pair of dishwasher gloves is a good substitute.

✓ **Masks.** Store a pack of 10 to 20 at your house, and keep one per person in your bug-out bag. Surgical masks are easy to store and can help some to keep germs from spreading, but if you're really serious about preventing infection, N95 masks are much better. They have pores small enough to screen out 95 percent of airborne particles. The problem is that many people find it very uncomfortable to keep these on, properly sealed, for more than a few minutes.

✓ **Bulb syringe** (that rubber bulb you use to clean out babies' noses) for irrigating wounds.

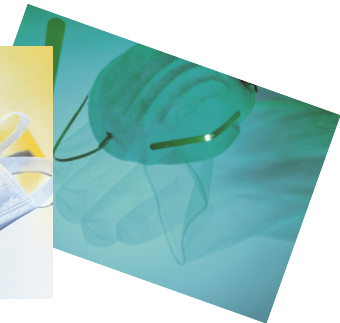
✓ **Alcohol (rubbing, or isopropyl).** Good to sterilize instruments and, if you have no clean water, to clean wounds and wash hands. (Instructions for sterilizing instruments are in my [e-books](#).) I'd keep a bottle around the house (the drinking kind will do in a pinch) and some **individually packed alcohol pads** in each of the kits.

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Quick Tip

I like liquid, bulk items for home storage but individual packs for the travel kits so they don't leak.

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Surgical mask (left) vs. N95 mask (right).

✓ **Betadine pads.** Good for cleaning around wounds. If need be, you can [disinfect water](#) with them by adding a pad per quart of water and waiting half an hour. The water can be used for drinking or irrigating a wound.

✓ **Antibiotic ointment.** I like **bacitracin**. Triple-antibiotic ointment (Neosporin) is fine, but some people are allergic to it.

2. Bandages and Splints

✓ **Adhesive bandages**—otherwise known as Band-Aids. Have few regular size and a few large size in each bag.

✓ **Kerlix gauze rolls.** They're kind of like continuous rolls of gauze. You can cut one to size for a dressing, fold it over to make it thicker, wrap it around an extremity to make a [pressure dressing](#), or secure a splint around a leg or arm. Take at least four rolls if they'll fit.

✓ **Elastic bandages.** I think the 3-inch or 4-inch width is the most versatile. One or two bandages will do.

✓ **SAM Splints.** Put a standard size in each kit. They're versatile and light—for splinting sprains and fractures. Know in advance [how to use one](#).

✓ **Bandage scissors.**

✓ **Matches in a waterproof case, or a lighter,** to sterilize needles, safety pins, paper clips, etc.

✓ **Cotton balls soaked in petroleum jelly (Vaseline),** stored in a **resealable plastic bag.** You may need the Vaseline to make a seal on an [occlusive dressing](#) for a chest puncture wound that involves a lung. In addition, the soaked cotton balls make great fire starters.



Other Supplies to Keep at Home

1. An **aloe vera plant.** Use the gel inside the leaves for burns and soothing the skin.
2. **Honey,** honey, honey, for eating and [coughs](#). Keep some manuka honey, such as Medihoney, to treat [infected skin wounds](#). (Don't give honey to or use it on babies.)
3. **More** of all the other supplies. (You can only keep so much in a bag.)

✓ **Duct tape.** Actually, any tape will do. This is just a good all-purpose one. You can tape anything from a bandage to a [wound](#) with it. And it's waterproof. You can even use it for some [makeshift spectacles](#). You might keep a roll of **paper tape** also, in case someone's allergic to the other kinds.

✓ **Super glue.** Good to put on small finger nicks, which could lead to big infections in a dirty environment. It also can help the duct tape stick better.

✓ **Safety pins** of various sizes to pin elastic bandages, make slings, stick a hole in a plastic bag or jug for [pressure irrigation](#), or pick out small splinters (after sterilizing the pin).

3. Other Essential Supplies

✓ **Over-the-counter medications.** Have liquid or chewable sources for the kids. Keep a few individual packets in each kit. Read directions and precautions before using.

- **Ibuprofen** (Advil, Aleve) or **acetaminophen** (Tylenol) for pain and fever relief.
- **Diphenhydramine** (Benadryl) for allergies or to use as an occasional sleep aid.
- **Ranitidine** (Zantac), **famotidine** (Pepcid), or your favorite **antacid** for heartburn and acid reflux.
- **Loperamide** (Imodium) for diarrhea.

✓ **EpiPen.** This is epinephrine in an automatic, self-injecting container. You need a prescription, but it's unlikely your regular doctor would mind writing you one. Keep it readily available to grab at a moment's notice in case of life-threatening allergic reactions. It could also be used for a severe [asthma attack](#) if you don't have an inhaler. (Also keep an **EpiPen Jr** if you have children.) As soon as you purchase your EpiPen, be sure to open the box and read the instructions well so you'll know how to use it before you need it. Quick use could mean the difference between life and death.

✓ **Thermometer.** A digital oral one is fine.

What About Prescription Meds?

Never completely run out of your regular prescription medications. Get them filled a few days early, and store the extra.

Or you could ask your doctor for a prescription for an extra month's supply to keep on hand. Some doctors will do this, and some won't, but it doesn't hurt to ask. Just realize, you'll probably have to pay full price. It's unlikely your insurance is going to pay for the extra prescription.



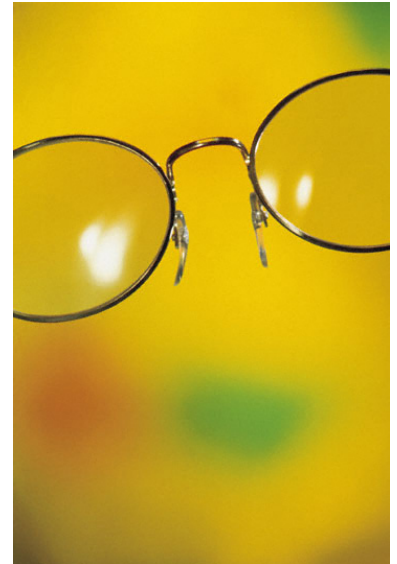
✓ **One 14-gauge, 2-inch-long hollow needle** in case someone has a tension pneumothorax (collapsed lung) and needs chest air-pressure release. (Caution: This procedure can be very dangerous. Read [this blog post](#) for more information.)

✓ **Emergency blanket.** [Hypothermia](#) can be a danger in injured people. Any blanket will do. The heat-reflective types (which reflect your body heat so you warm yourself) are light and less bulky for travel.

✓ **Emergency airways**—to keep the back of the tongue from obstructing the airway in an unconscious person. You need a child and adult size. You can learn how to use them in a CPR class.

✓ **Glasses**, extra pair.

Of course, you're going to need **water** for drinking and for cleaning wounds. Store as much as you can—if possible, 2 gallons per person per day. For portability, carry a good, reliable **water filter and bottle**. Just be sure it's the kind that filters bacteria, parasites, etc.



Optional Supplies

If you still have room in your bag, add ...

1. More Wound-Dressing Supplies

- ✓ **Nonstick sterile gauze**, which helps keep the wound fluids from drying and sticking to the bandage. Keep a few in each kit.
- ✓ **QuikClot gauze**, for use with bad bleeding wounds.
- ✓ **Israeli bandage** (also called an emergency bandage). This can be used as a pressure dressing or a tourniquet. It's easy to learn how to use, but know how before you need it.
- ✓ **Vet wrap**. This is a self-adherent wrap. It's kind of like an elastic bandage that clings to itself. But it's not readily reusable. The human medical brand is Coban, but vet wrap is cheaper, and otherwise, I don't know that there's a difference.
- ✓ **Nonsterile gauze (sanitary napkins will do)**. I like the 3-by-3 or 4-by-4-inch gauze. I'd keep a pack in each of the bags or just get a big pack and store some in **resealable plastic bags** for the various first-aid kits. You can add a few **sterile sponges** to each kit also. They usually come individually wrapped. (You can use sterile gauze even if you don't need it to be sterile. It's just more expensive.)
- ✓ **Tampons**—good for nosebleeds or for any place they fit to stop the bleeding.
- ✓ **Hydrocortisone 1-percent cream** for eczema, [poison oak or ivy](#), or any other noninfectious skin irritation.
- ✓ **Aloe vera**—the gel for the kits. It's great first-aid for burns.
- ✓ **Lidocaine gel** for numbing a wound.
- ✓ **Petroleum jelly** (Vaseline) for skin moisturizing. It's also about the only thing that gets tar off skin or hair. And, as mentioned in the “Bandages and Splints” section, it helps seal chest puncture wounds.



✓ **Sterile gloves and dressings** (as opposed to the less expensive nonsterile kind), which are most important when tending to burns or wounds that involve broken bones. (See [my e-books](#) for details.)

2. Other Supplies and Gadgets

✓ **Slings**, child and adult sizes.

✓ **Syringes (10 ml), 5.** They can be used to irrigate wounds (don't put the needle into the syringe for this), inject medicines, give liquid medicine to children (again, without the needle) or measure other small quantities of liquids.

✓ **Sterile needles (1-inch or 1 ½-inch, 22-gauge or 22-gauge), 1 box.** These can be attached to a syringe to give an injection. They're also handy to pick out a foreign object from the skin or to [lance a boil](#).

✓ **Headlamp**—not exactly medical, but it sure comes in handy. It's amazing how a little extra light can help when you're trying to do a medical procedure.

✓ **Stethoscope** to listen to the heart and [lungs](#). Listen to some normal ones ahead of time.

✓ **Blood-pressure cuff.** This is bulky, and really, feeling a pulse with your fingers—noting its rate and whether it's weak or strong—can tell you enough in the field. But a blood-pressure cuff can help you monitor whether a blood pressure is trending lower or higher. This could clue you in to whether a person in shock is getting better, or it could help you know how much [blood pressure](#) medicine you should be taking. A manual cuff in particular can also be used for a [tourniquet](#) or [pressure dressing](#). For home, if you don't use one much, consider an automatic one because it's easier to use. The arm kinds tend to be more accurate than the wrist types. Check its accuracy ahead of time by letting a trained person check your blood pressure with a manual cuff, then the automatic one.

✓ **Pulse oximeter.** Clip this to your finger (no needles, no blood), and it tells you the oxygen saturation in your blood. You can use it when you suspect a panic attack, or heart or lung problems. Learn more [here](#).



If you have a smaller, separate, leak-proof and waterproof bag, add:

- ✓ **Medihoney.** It treats [infected wounds](#) and can be used for [coughs](#). (Don't use for babies.)
 - ✓ **Clove oil**—for toothaches.
 - ✓ **Tea tree oil**—for [poison ivy](#), lice, and [scabies](#), and for antifungal and antibacterial use.
 - ✓ **Paracord survival bracelet.** This is a strong cord with multiple uses that's wrapped up as a bracelet.
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If you have appropriate hands-on training, add:

- ✓ **IV materials:**
 - A bag of **IV fluids**, like lactated Ringer's solution.
 - An **IV kit**.
 - **Several needles/catheters, butterfly-type infusion sets, or intraosseus infusion needles.** Many paramedics would say the latter are the easiest in a nonhospital emergency setting.
- ✓ **Suture kits:**
 - **Suture holder.**
 - **Small scissors** would be nice, especially if you're going to be the one to take the sutures out.
 - **Suture with a needle connected**; 3-0 or 4-0 nylon (Ethilon) should be strong enough to hold most wounds together.
 - For local anesthesia (numbing), **lidocaine solution**, 1 or 2 percent, is what medical personnel use, but it's prescription. You'll need **syringes** and **needles** too. Lidocaine gel or ice packs and other options have variable results.
- ✓ **Skin staples and a skin-staples remover.** To me, skin stapling is easier than learning suturing. My [book on wounds](#) has a video link that shows how to do this.

Antibiotics

Talk to your doctor. He or she might give you a prescription for at least one round of treatment to add to your emergency medical supplies. Antibiotics must be stored in a cool, dry place. Temperature extremes can alter their potency. Please **read the package insert** on any medicine before taking it, and note the dosages, side effects, interactions, warnings, etc. **The guidelines below are only partial.** And remember, antibiotics don't work on viruses. Antibiotic overuse has contributed to some bacteria becoming antibiotic-resistant, so only use these medicines when you need them (but take the full round when you do so you're sure to knock out the bug).

Azithromycin (Z-Pak) is an erythromycin-type antibiotic that can treat strep throat, ear infections, [sinus infections](#), bronchitis, [pneumonia](#), [whooping cough](#), and skin infections. Of course, there's always chance the bacteria is resistant or the infection is a virus. Azithromycin also treats the sexually transmitted infection chlamydia.

Amoxicillin is a great drug if you're not allergic to penicillin, but many bacteria, such as staph, have become resistant to it. **Cephalexin** is a good alternative.

Ciprofloxacin (Cipro) is good for a bacterial gastrointestinal infection, but only take it if the infection is severe or won't go away. Ciprofloxacin is also good for prostatitis and urinary-tract infections such as [cystitis](#). It treats gonorrhea too. It may cause abnormalities in anyone whose bones are still growing (typically 18 years old and under). Don't use if pregnant.

Metronidazole (Flagyl) treats the [intestinal parasite giardia](#) and the sexually transmitted parasite trichomonas. Makes you deathly sick if mixed with alcohol.

Sepra and **Bactrim** are sulfa drugs good for urinary-tract infections. The antibiotic both of these contain is one of the only oral antibiotics that treats community-acquired [methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus \(MRSA\)](#). Don't use if pregnant.

Ivermectin kills many intestinal-worm infections, including [pinworms](#). It also kills [scabies](#) and body, pubic, and head [lice](#). Don't take if pregnant, breastfeeding or under 6 years old.

Mupirocin (Bactroban) is a prescription ointment or cream that kills bacteria, even MRSA. (The over-the-counter antibacterial ointments help prevent infections but don't actively kill bacteria.)

What If I Can't Get Antibiotics?

Many infections, such as sore throats and gastrointestinal infections, are caused by viruses, so antibiotics don't help anyway. There are alternatives to antibiotics for some other infections, including skin infections, [pinworms](#), [lice](#), [scabies](#), [fungal infections](#), [yeast infections](#) and numerous others. For details, keep reading TheSurvivalDoctor.com blog posts, where I cover various common problems.



THE SURVIVAL DOCTOR'S™

Ultimate Emergency Medical Supplies Pharmacy Checklist

These recommendations are per emergency kit. Customize according to your needs. The list is not meant to be exhaustive.

<p>Infection Preventers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Vinyl gloves, one-size-fits-all or large (cheaper may be more likely to tear) <input type="checkbox"/> Masks, pack of 10 to 20 for the house; 1 per person for bug-out bag <input type="checkbox"/> Bulb syringe <input type="checkbox"/> Rubbing alcohol, bottle (for home) <input type="checkbox"/> Rubbing alcohol, individually packed pads (for travel kit) <input type="checkbox"/> Betadine pads <input type="checkbox"/> Antibiotic ointment (bacitracin; some are allergic to triple antibiotic) 	<p>Bandages and Splints</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Adhesive bandages (Band-Aids), regular & large <input type="checkbox"/> Kerlix gauze rolls, at least 4 <input type="checkbox"/> Elastic bandages (3" or 4"), 1 or 2 <input type="checkbox"/> SAM Splint (standard size) <input type="checkbox"/> Bandage scissors <input type="checkbox"/> Cotton balls <input type="checkbox"/> Petroleum jelly (to soak cotton balls; optional: extra for skin moisturizing, removing tar) <p>Optional:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Paper tape (for sensitive skin) <input type="checkbox"/> Nonstick sterile gauze, a few per kit <input type="checkbox"/> Nonsterile gauze (3"x3" or 4"x4") or sanitary napkins <input type="checkbox"/> Tampons <input type="checkbox"/> Sterile sponges, 1 to 2 packs <input type="checkbox"/> Sterile gloves & dressings (for burns, wounds involving broken bones) <input type="checkbox"/> Slings (child & adult sizes) 	<p>Other</p> <p>Medications (including individual packs for kits & liquid/chewable for kids):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Ibuprofen or acetaminophen—pain, fever <input type="checkbox"/> Diphenhydramine (Benadryl)—allergies, sleep <input type="checkbox"/> Ranitidine (Zantac), famotidine (Pepcid), or antacid <input type="checkbox"/> Loperamide (Imodium)—diarrhea <input type="checkbox"/> _____ <input type="checkbox"/> _____ <p><input type="checkbox"/> Thermometer</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Emergency blanket</p> <p>Optional:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Hydrocortisone 1% cream—skin allergies <input type="checkbox"/> Aloe vera gel—burns <input type="checkbox"/> Lidocaine gel—numbing <input type="checkbox"/> Tea tree oil—some skin problems <input type="checkbox"/> Headlamp <input type="checkbox"/> Stethoscope <input type="checkbox"/> Blood-pressure cuff (manual type may only be available online) <input type="checkbox"/> Pulse oximeter
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For People With Hands-On Training

Note: *You'll probably need to order these supplies online.*

- ☐ IV materials: fluids; kit; needles/catheters, butterfly-type infusion sets, or intraosseus infusion needles (the latter may be easiest)
- ☐ Suture kit: suture holder; small scissors; suture with needle connected [perhaps 3-0 or 4-0 nylon (Ethilon)]; lidocaine solution, 1% or 2% (prescription); syringes & needles
- ☐ Skin staples, staple remover (learn how to staple in [The Survival Doctor's Guide to Wounds](#))

THE SURVIVAL DOCTOR'S™

Ultimate Emergency Medical Supplies

Checklist for Other Stores

These recommendations are per emergency kit. Customize according to your needs. The list is not meant to be exhaustive.

<p>General-Supply Store</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Lighter/matches in waterproof case <input type="checkbox"/> Duct tape <input type="checkbox"/> Super glue <input type="checkbox"/> Safety pins, various sizes <p>General-Supply or Grocery Store</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Resealable plastic bags (for storage) <input type="checkbox"/> Honey <input type="checkbox"/> Water, at least 6 gallons per person 	<p>Army Surplus Store</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Israeli bandage (or “emergency bandage”) [optional] <p>Army Surplus or Sporting Goods Store</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Travel water bottle with filter for bacteria, parasites <input type="checkbox"/> Emergency blanket <input type="checkbox"/> QuikClot gauze [optional] <input type="checkbox"/> Paracord survival bracelet [optional], or buy one at SurvivalStraps.com that benefits the Wounded Warrior Project, a charity for wounded service members
<p>Health Food Stores</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Clove oil—toothaches [optional] 	<p>Farm Supply or Pet Store</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Vet wrap (more expensive human brand is Coban) [optional]
<p>Online:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 14-gauge, 2-inch-long hollow needle (for chest air-pressure release in tension pneumothorax) <input type="checkbox"/> Emergency airways, adult & child sizes <input type="checkbox"/> Syringes (10 ml), 5 [optional] <input type="checkbox"/> Sterile needles (1-inch or 1/2-inch, 22-gauge or 22-gauge), 1 box [optional] <input type="checkbox"/> Medihoney [optional] 	
<p>Doctor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Extras of prescription medicines <input type="checkbox"/> EpiPen (& EpiPen Jr if you have children) <input type="checkbox"/> Antibiotics 	<p>Other:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Aloe vera plant (for the house) <input type="checkbox"/> Glasses, extra pair
<p>Additional Supplies</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; align-items: flex-end;"> <div><input type="checkbox"/> _____</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> _____</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> _____</div> </div>	